

Unlike Balanced Literacy, Structured Literacy is explicit, systematic teaching that focuses on phonological awareness, word recognition, phonics, decoding, spelling, morphemes, vocabulary, and syntax at the sentence and paragraph levels. Utilizing a Structured Literacy approach is best because it avoids making assumptions about what students are learning. By explicitly teaching all concepts, students who easily learn the patterns of reading will learn quickly. And those who otherwise may struggle will get the instruction they need for success. Furthermore, these students are more likely to be identified if specific weaknesses arise in their reading skills.

English is complicated and, at times, seemingly illogical. Consider the following sentences being read by a student: They were too close to the door to close it. And, the wind was too strong to wind the sail. How about a sentence like this: When the bough breaks, the baby will fall, though, when he falls we hope he doesn't fall through the floor onto the rough ground and develop a cough. There are five different pronunciations of the grapheme "ough" in this one sentence. Similar challenges are shared when encoding sounds for writing words. Beyond grapheme-phoneme similarities, Structured Literacy also explicitly teaches syllable structure. Without knowledge of syllable structure and the pronunciations of different spelling options, there would be no means to decipher these sentences.

There is a scope and sequence that creates the backbone of Structured Literacy. It is designed to give students the most natural path to mastery, while minimizing confusion and incorrect attempts. Structured Literacy gradually builds the complexity of students' knowledge while simultaneously giving them access to as many words as possible to begin building fluency. Here is a short lesson. (This is not a syllable "clap, clap".) The first thing you need to know is; A syllable is a word or a part of a word that makes one vowel sound. If we look at the word cat, there is one vowel ("a"), and that vowel is followed by a consonant ("t"), creating a closed syllable. Closed is one of the six syllable types. Understanding the closed syllable structure allows instant recognition of the sound the vowel will make in this word. Because we hear the short vowel sound followed by a consonant sound, we can then read and spell the word correctly. If we can spell the word cat correctly, then we also should be able to spell and read an unlimited number of VC structured words. Then when the student learns the syllable division patterns. They are prepared to read longer unfamiliar words like hobgoblin, bombastic, inconsistent, and pandemic. These words are only multisyllabic words with closed syllables. Mastery of each of the six syllable types in turn similarly builds students' strategic approach to word identification and confidence in reading and writing.

In conclusion, explicitly teaching content empowers an educator to teach diagnostically as issues in learning new skills become apparent. This both minimizes incorrect practices and assists in producing vital neural pathways that are essential for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.